

THE YOUNG MINISTER.

by EMMA ST. CLAIR.

As Mr. Melville and his wife were one day travelling in the country, chance (if that be not an unmeaning word) led them by an obscure hovel, whose squalid appearance attracting the curiosity of the lady, she expressed a wish that the servant might stop the carriage, while they amused themselves a few moments by entering the dwelling. Mr. Melville consented. They entered, and beheld around a sort of table, seven children and a mother partaking of their meagre fare with the zeal of epicures. Every thing in the room bespoke the most abject poverty; and the lady, though a votary of fashion, found her idle curiosity put to flight by the awakening of benevolence, which birth, wealth and luxury had too long permitted to slumber. But the gentleman's attention was particularly arrested by one of the little boys, who struck him as bearing a peculiar resemblance to the son of his hope, whom the grave had but recently wrested from him. He remarked this to his wife, and suggested taking the boy away with them, and adopting him into their family. The lady at first objected, but the native goodness of her heart triumphed, and she acquiesced in her husband's wish — "though," said she, "he has not a spark of intelligence in his countenance, and I fear never will have other than that vacant look which appalls me."

"Hush!" said the husband, "he has a head of the finest moulding, and if spirit cannot use the materials nature has stored there, it will be because her artificial forms deny it."

The proposal was accordingly made to the mother, who was easily prevailed upon to part with the child by assurances of kind treatment, and some assistance given to help her along in her rugged path. The boy apparently took no notice of any thing around him until reaching the home of his benefactors, (a beautiful residence on the banks of the--,) when he clung to the gentleman as if oppressed with awe at the undreamed of splendor of things around him; while a little girl, (the only child of the parents) bounded into the arms of the mother like a little cherub. At seeing her the boy clung still closer to the

gentleman, as if a being from another sphere had met his vision. The little girl at first gave him but a curious glance, but when arrayed after the manner of her little brother, she ran up to him saying, "why didn't you kiss me, Frank?—I didn't know you, you been gone so long! Do you love me, now 1 you kissed me when you went away." The mother sobbed audibly at the thought so vividly renewed of her lost Francis, but was glad to see the child so happily deceived.

Francis Melville (for such was the name they gave him) soon became a handsome boy, and the heart of his protector was drawn out toward him with all the fervor it would have been for his own son, as he witnessed the "early stirrings" of a mind which he deemed cast in no common mould.

When his protegee had attained the age of ten years, Mr. Melville resolved on sending him to a public school, as he could not devote that time to the boy which he knew should be devoted to him.

The time soon came when he was to depart for the academic groves of—, and sad was the day to the whole family circle—especially to its youngest member, whose tears flowed fast as he gave her the parting kiss with unusual fervor. u Now, my dear Arabella," said the father, when he had left the parental roof, "now we will see who in seven years will make the most improvement—who at nineteen will be the most accomplished in the truest acceptation of the term."

Kind, frequent letters came from the boy, which showed the true and generous heart, as well as the rising scholar. The time at length came when he was to be removed to the University of—, at which, after spending the usual time, he was to choose whatever field of action his talent and inclination might lead him to; for his benefactor, though never disclosing to him that he was other than his own son, had always impressed it upon him that he had his own fortune to make in the world, and that he had nothing to expect from him in his own lifetime at least, but enough to enable him unfettered to pursue the path to usefulness and honor—the path which by securing to him these riches which are beyond fortune, might give him the means of obtaining for himself these which are within its reach. And never was that path pursued with more unwavering industry—never were the honors of our University bestowed upon

one with a more prodigal hand.

When his collegiate term had expired, he returned to the generous home of his adopted parents, which he had visited but once since leaving it for the first time, when he found, as now, his sister absent in town, where she was receiving her education. This was severely trying to him, for his mind released from study, he had depended much upon the presence of his sister to restore the tone of his feelings, which a too severe application had in a great measure impaired. But necessity was imperative; and he left again to pursue a Theological course (which he had long been bent upon) without seeing her, whose image in its hallowed brightness had hitherto preserved his thoughts from wandering. Mrs. Melville expressed much regret that the children could not see each other; but her husband had too much sincerity of heart to express any regret at what was but the effect of his own design. Arabella had often wondered and wept that she could see no more of an only brother, but she had so many resources for thought and amusement that her tears were soon dried. Her parents too assured her that he had grown so very dignified she would find but little companionship with him.

Melville had, in fact, not only prevented their seeing each other, but had kept them as far as possible ignorant of each others' progress. And when he looked upon his daughter, now a blooming girl of nineteen, with her womanly though simple manner, he felt quite sure that no one would recognize in her the sportive child he had fondled upon his knee. Nor less difficult did he imagine it would be to detect in the pensive dignity and urbane manners of his adopted son, the shy and absent boy whom his fostering hand had reared to a hopeful manhood. He looked upon both with a father's pride—nor was that a false discernment which had seen in the boy, "the father of the man," the promise of greatness, or now beheld in the daughter one of earth's most lovely beings. With almost every endowment that nature could lavish, she had grown up amid all the advantages which wealth, directed by the judicious father and fond mother could procure. And had she possessed none of what the fashionable term "accomplishments," her deep-seated goodness of heart must have won the affection of all who knew her. But she would have passed with that class for an accomplished girl," while the discerning few would have applied to her the

epithet in its deeper signification. She was indeed alive to all the beautiful and excellent on the earth. Genius she revered with idolatry; and her taste found peculiar gratification in the contributions of L. K. which appeared in some of the first periodicals of the day; and by her urgent request, her father had several of the pieces set to music, the peculiar beauty of which, when chanted by her sweet voice, and played with the ethereal harmony of all her executions, struck the fountains of every heart where beamed a ray of sensibility.

It was in the autumn of the year-, when Melville proposed to his wife and daughter a journey to the South. The proposal was a joyous one to the enthusiastic girl, for her dreams had long been of that sunny climate. The journey was accordingly taken, and on their way they stopped during a Sabbath in the town of -- where Arabella received a polite invitation from an acquaintance from New York, to accompany him to the-church, where a student of rising fame was to address the society for the day. The invitation was accepted, and Arabella waited with intense interest to see the young speaker ascend the pulpit. And every eye was in feet turned toward him as in "life's green spring," he appeared in the desk with his high forehead and pale face to administer to their spiritual and truest interest. His manner was peculiarly felicitous, and the deep harmony of his voice, while giving utterance to high and holy thoughts, won the almost breathless attention of the audience. " Whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops," were the words from which he spoke: and never was there a more fervid, logical, and eloquent discourse uttered. The important bearings of even the most trivial actions, the infinite consequence of every thought we cherish on all time, and the surety that the coming of time or eternity will shew all in the strongest light, were insisted upon with irresistible eloquence. But when the sermon was ended, and all were held in awe at the truths elicited, the alarm was made that a lady had fainted; and the young minister inferring from the countenances of those around her that the affair was serious, came to express his interest, an interest which was visibly increased when the fair being before him opened her dark hazle eye with an expression in it such as thrilled every fibre of his soul. He felt indeed that his visions of loveliness were there embodied. And when sufficiently recovered, he saw her borne away in the

carriage, he felt she had touched a chord in his heart that had never before vibrated. And what were his emotions as she gave him a parting glance, and returned to the inn from which she was to depart on the morrow, perhaps never again to listen to a voice like that! But "who was the lady?—perhaps the wife of the gentleman she was with." He, however, thought that the circumstances of the day would justify his enquiries about her, and he ascertained the circumstance of her being on a journey with her parents, but nothing farther.

As they pursued their journey, Arabella was more pensive than usual, and expressed little of her natural enthusiasm even at the mingled splendors of our autumn woods; for the image within had eclipsed all other beauty; and Frank, and all preference for others alike forgotten, she surrendered herself to the pleasing contemplation of the eloquent stranger. Her parents rallied her, and assured her that on their return she should be introduced to the young orator, whom they rightly conjectured was the object of her thoughts.

And not too fast did the hours pass till their return to the town of—, when it so happened that an invitation was received from an old acquaintance of Mrs. Melville's to a general party. But Mr. Melville felt obliged to decline going from the urgency of business, and his lady not wishing to go without her husband, Arabella therefore went alone. Almost the first person she was introduced to was a Mr. Reed, in whom she immediately recognized the young minister. At first she was greatly embarrassed, but this soon subsided, and they conversed together as though bent upon an acquaintance. They talked of our present literature, and spoke of their particular preferences among its young aspirants. Arabella showed herself an enthusiast for the poetry of L. K. which she said was so after her own heart, that it seemed to her it must have emanated from it; Mr. Reed colored slightly at this remark, and returned an equivocal answer. But the young lady was not to be put off thus, and she asked him directly for his opinion of the writer.

"I fear," said he, "I should be a partial judge, as he happens to be a particular friend of mine."

"Indeed," said the young lady, "do tell me what you know of him?" Just then their host joined them, and wished Arabella to be seated at the piano, and to accompany it with her voice. She hesitated, and would have refused, but her New York acquaintance assured them she had not a shadow of excuse, and with a beating heart she complied. As Mr. Reed handed her to the piano, she whispered "you shall now hear one of your friend's songs." Thus was it for the first time that he exulted in his own productions, as he heard from the sweetest voice in the world some of his juvenile rhymes. When she had finished, he again offered his arm, and whispered that he "now thought his friend a poet."

"Do you leave town soon?" enquired he, as loitering behind the rest of the company; he waited upon her to the supper-room.

"Tomorrow, I suppose," returned she.

"Tomorrow," echoed he, imprinting a kiss upon her delicate hand, and adding as if abstractedly, "that thou could'st know, fair being."

"Surely I have been dreaming," thought she, as she returned to her parents—"that deep soul could never descend to love any earthly being—a stranger especially. I deceive myself—but no, that glance, those words but half audibly uttered." But the morrow came, and Arabella and her parents left for home.

Time passed on, and each succeeding month hallowed but more deeply the image of the transient acquaintance, whom Arabella in all probability should never again behold.

Letters came from Frank as usual, though there seemed something a little mystic about them, as though his mind was "ill at ease." This rather alarmed the parents, and feeling that his health was suffering from a too close application, they wrote proposing for him to come and spend the summer with them. This proposal he gladly accepted, but was much disappointed on coming home to find his sister absent on a visit; for he had hoped that in her presence he should forget the image that interfered so boldly with his progress. The

time, however, soon came when the sister returned, and was met by one of the domestics at the door with the news of her brother's arrival. She was soon in her father's arms, expressing her joy at the near prospect of seeing her long absent brother, when her mother entered from the garden, followed by Frank.

"Arabella," said the father, " your brother Francis." Frank receded a few steps in amazement, and Arabella, equally bewildered, leaned back upon the sofa without making any response. The parents left the room, and with a death-like paleness Frank gave a brother's kiss to the cheek that heeded it not. But as she at length gave him a conscious look, he whispered,

"Truth is stranger than fiction, is it not, my sister? But let us forget the romantic past (if indeed reality is here) and be happy in our discovered relation My heart has once given out its full music for you, and never again can woman touch a similar chord."

"Dear, dear brother," said the girl, " the thought of you hath given me nobler being."

"Now play to me one of my friend's songs," said the brother, " and I will one day introduce you to him."

"Dear Francis," said Arabella, as one delightful afternoon of that happy summer they had wandered to the woods to enjoy the beauty of its pencilled leaves and murmuring waters, " dear Francis, there was a feeling about our interview at — , that might have made me more than suspect I had known you before; but to speak the truth, I referred it to some strange reminiscence of an earlier being. I suppose you will think me visionary—father says I have a good deal of the German mysticism about me."

"O call not the idea of a pre-existence mere mysticism," interrupted the brother, "unless indeed you would class all the higher truths of intellect under some such head. The poet speaks my inherent conviction, that

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:

The soul that rises with us, our life's a star,

Hath had elsewhere its setting,

And cometh from afar."

"You always agree with me," replied Arabella, "and thus make my treasured thoughts doubly dear to me. And you will pardon me if I am a little metaphysical this afternoon—plodding, mother would call it. Do you think, Francis, we are free beings—that we are an impulse to ourselves?"

"That is a subject which has baffled too many sages to cloud thy lovely brow. The poet (earth's best philosopher) tells us that the freedom of the universe consists in that active principle which 'from link to link doth circulate the soul of all the worlds.' "

"O, Francis, I sometimes wish I could strip the veil from things, and know something of the great first cause least understood.' "

"I have often thought," replied her brother, "if there was a fault in your character, it was that restless and unnatural—at least uncommon propensity to press your enquiries upon the unknown and the unfathomable. Be assured, dearest Arabella, that

"Enough to know is given,

Clouds, winds, and stars their part fulfil,

Ours is to trust in Heaven."

"I would," she answered, "I do unhesitatingly trust in a kind Providence; but I see so much misery in life at which the heart of sympathy recoils, that I sometimes wonder at the economy of that Providence."

"But you know, my dear, it is but a small part of the system of things that we can discern, and while it is thus (as here it ever must be) it would be madness in us to make aught an argument against the divine superintendence. If all was happiness around us there would be no room for active benevolence, and if our faith were put to no test, the night that lurks within her must forever slumber.'

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Thus happily passed the summer away, and the young minister left again the home of his youth, to watch over the spiritual interests of an enlightened society, who entertained for him the truest affection. Yet when thus settled would he often sigh that the endearing ties of domestic life were not for him; for well he knew, after the communion he had enjoyed with his sister, that his heart must revolt from all meaner preference. For he understood not how so many men of cultivated intellect could bind their fate to the trifling and empty spirit of—, alas! too many of earth's fair daughters.

Meanwhile Mr. Melville seeing that his children had become all the world to each other, and feeling that no insurmountable obstacle existed to their union, resolved to make a full disclosure to Frank of his early history, and leave him free to become indeed his son. The disclosure was accordingly made, and Mr. Melville's heart was melted within him by the overflowing gratitude of the young man, whose sorrow to find that he was not indeed the son of those whom he had loved so well, was more than compensated by the thought that he might now offer that hand to the daughter, which he knew would once have been with joy accepted. He then related to the father what had passed between him and his daughter while unknown to each other—the circumstance of his bearing at that time the name of M Reed," which arose from his offering some articles to the public while at the University under that assumed name, articles which met with such very unexpected success, that he resolved, on leaving there for a distant part of the country, to adopt the name which had won his youthful laurels. The father was amused at the recital, and assured him it was the first wish of his heart to see him united to his daughter. Frank accordingly wrote to Arabella, adverting to the place he had held in his heart while unknown to her—to the perfect similarity of their taste, and the full confidence she possessed in his judgment; and then spoke of the long

friendship he had with her favorite author, and of his desire to promote an union between him and his beloved sister; and assured her that she should love him with all the ardor she had felt for the stranger orator, or the late unrecognized brother; that his friend had seen and loved her, and would offer her through him the hand which alone was not yet hers. He then urged her to accept the gift, and assured her happiness if the union of kindred hearts could give it.

Arabella at first thought it hard that her brother should wish her to accept the hand of any one; but one whom he esteemed so highly, and as he had exerted such power over her spirit, was not to be discarded without reflection; and she wrote her brother she would be guided by his will. The parents signified their full approbation, and as the day appointed for the marriage drew nigh, young Melville, with a joyful heart, came to his generous home to resign his right to his long known friend. Arabella, with an unusual paleness, gave him but a silent greeting; yet never looked she more lovely—never shone her pure spirit more brightly. Yet felt she at heart a dread misgiving; and when they were left alone she threw herself into her brother's arms, telling him that she never could consummate the vows she had permitted him to make; and entreated him as he valued his happiness, to save her from the embrace of his love, whose spirit she confessed seemed but one with her own. Then with a triumph known only to reciprocated love, he told the tale her father had given him of his early childhood, his identity with her favorite writer, and declared himself the happiest of men.

The overflow of gladness on her part is not for our pen to trace. A house in his chosen parish which had been fitted up with the most refined taste, was ready to receive them. The most perfect order was observed in every department of it—and a rich treat it was to pass an hour in their well selected library, the window from which commanded an extensive and most romantic prospect. And seldom passed there a day in which was not made by the happy family that moral and intellectual advancement, for which alone to those "whom rational we call," life should be coveted.

Shortly after their marriage, Melville, with his beautiful wife, visited the spot

where once stood the shattered hovel; but no traces of it could be found, nor could any intelligence be had of those who had once been its inmates. But the genuine principles of that religion of which he was the able and faithful champion, as well as the early circumstances of his own life, led him to recognize that native equality in the human family which accidental circumstances so completely destroy. The spirit of his wife was in perfect unison with his own. To every benevolent cause she gave her aid; and every act of kindness was performed as a matter of course, and not with the air of those who seem to possess the consciousness of conferring a favor.

Many a child by their benevolent hand has been rescued from a hopeless ignorance, who, in their turn, we trust will diffuse the seeds of benevolence, which shall spring up again in other bosoms, sure to be multiplied in the same way forever.